VISIT…

Test 1A: Responding to the pulse of the music **GRADE 1**

Following on from the first steps in aural training found in the Associated Board's Preparatory Test, the candidate is required:

'To tap the pulse of a passage of music in 2 or 3 time played by the examiner. The examiner will commence playing the passage, and the candidate will be expected to join in as soon as possible by tapping the beat, stressing where the strong beat falls. The candidate will then be asked to state the time.'

It will be noticed that all the following pieces have a strong rhythmic character and, except for Nos.15 and 20, begin on the first beat of the bar. The ability to feel the pulse in music is an essential step towards playing rhythmically and being able to repeat rhythm accurately.

Every lesson in the early stages of learning an instrument should include practice in this skill. Occasionally the teacher should stop playing, having warned the pupil to continue tapping, so as to find out whether a steady pulse can be maintained.

Pupils should make clear what time the piece is in through the regular stress within their tapping, but it is good practice always to ask them to state whether it is in 2 or 3 time to ensure that they have taken in what they are doing. There is no need to continue playing the piece once the beat has been clearly established. Likewise the piece can be repeated if necessary. Tapping, using two or three fingers of one hand on to the palm of the other, will be found to be more satisfactory than clapping. Some teachers may find the use of a wood block or other percussion instrument effective.

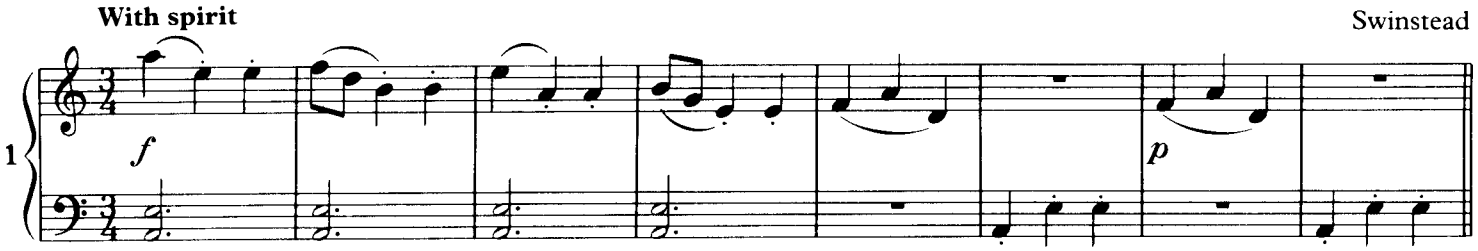
Many suitable examples will be found in the Associated Board's 'Easier Piano Pieces' series, notably Nos.2, 14, 21, 52, 64, 70.

In the early days of learning an instrument, pupils should always experience the pulse of the music before attempting to play the notes. Their pieces will therefore provide the best possible material for this important element of musicianship.

N.B. The candidate, in the examination, is required to tap the *pulse*, not the rhythm. It is a good principle to start tapping the pulse as soon as that is felt and then to introduce the regular stress, becoming more confident in the indication of the 'down-beat' stress as the piece progresses.

PRACTICE TESTS

Introduce this test by saying: 'Tap the pulse for this music, joining in as soon as you can. Stress where the strong beat falls.' *



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* Throughout this book, the wording of the introductions to each test is not necessarily the precise wording that the examiner will use in the examination.

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